

BCA Dispatch

Newsletter of the
Boston-Cambridge Alliance for Democracy

September
2005

DATELINES: Note that Hurricane Katrina struck on 29 August.

Some civilians believe the definition of an honest Texas pol is one who stays bought. —Molly Ivins

CHAPTER NEWS (Continued on Page 10)

Chapter Calendar

* * **Hurricane: A New Politics?** * *

The Boston-Cambridge Alliance for Democracy's next meeting will be on **Wednesday, September 21** from 7:00 p.m. at **Cambridge Friends Meeting**, 5 Longfellow Park, off Brattle St., Harvard Sq.

Nothing has stirred people since 9/11 as much as the destruction in New Orleans, the agony of the people there and in their "diaspora", and the behavior of federal officials and troops. The meeting will provide a forum to make sense of considerations you and your fellow citizens bring. What are the implications?

Here to moderate the discussion will be **Lester P. Lee, Jr.**, Visiting Asst. Prof. of History at Salem State College, advisory board of *Peacework* (AFSC), and old friend of BCA.

Come, and bring friends. Can we understand the complexities of this catastrophe, and see our way to a new politics?

Refreshments, including New Orleans/Cajun goodies.

Reclaiming New Orleans

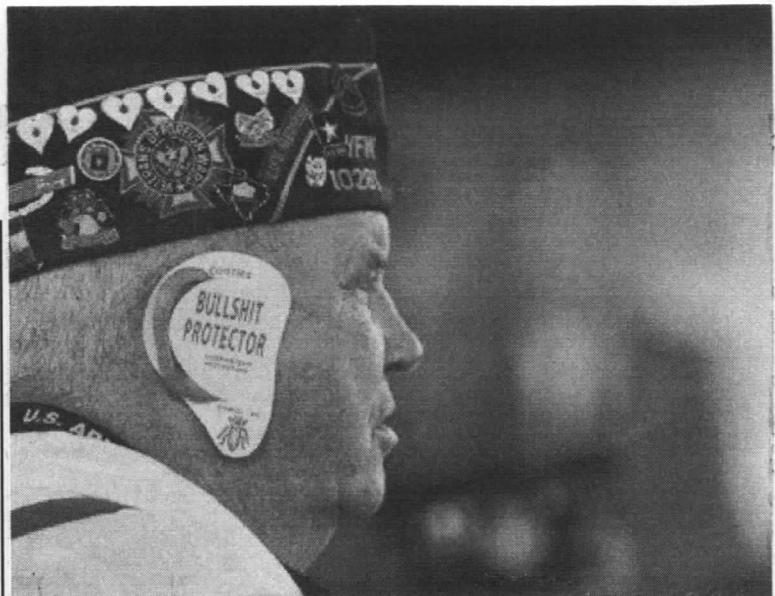
Labor, Peace, Black, and Poor Uniting

by Steven Sherman, *Counterpunch*, 9 September 2005

About ten years ago, Michael Moore complained that while US leftists raced to Nicaragua to pick coffee, they did not come to his hometown of Flint Michigan when it was being destroyed by plant closures. There was some truth to this. The Central America solidarity movement, which consumed quite a bit of the energy of the predominantly white progressive movement in the eighties, was far better organized and dynamic than any parallel movement against plant closures (and other effects of Reaganism) domestically.

But Moore's statement has always struck me as unfair. Revolutionary movements in Nicaragua and El Salvador, under constant attack from US-backed terrorists, called on North Americans to directly assist them. It was to the credit of people who went to those countries that they responded to this call. Where was the similar leadership in Flint? Even in *Roger and Me*, Moore's poignant documentary about that city, he provides little evidence that community or union leadership was able to articulate a strategy to fight back, let alone incorporate activists unfamiliar with the city.

Now a new situation with some parallels presents itself. While most of the predominantly white peace movement has been energetically preparing for an anti-war (Continued on Page 3 >>)



Bill Moyer, 73, wears a "Bullshit Protector" flap over his ear while President George W. Bush addresses the Veterans of Foreign Wars (AP)

EDITORIAL

Institutional Mendacity, Systemic Corruption

by Dave Lewit, *Alliance for Democracy*, Sept 2005

Acting President Bush appeared on television visiting an open air food distribution point in hurricane-ravaged New Orleans on September 2nd, according to Frank Tiggelaar, a Dutch viewer of CNN International. Bush was reassuring millions of viewers that the government was doing everything possible, which was a lie. Tiggelaar also watched ZDF German TV, which reported that Bush's visit was a completely staged event. The German crew witnessed how that "food distribution point was torn down immediately after the president and the herd of 'news people' had left and that others, which were allegedly being set up, were abandoned at the same time. The people in the area were once again left to fend for themselves, said ZDF."

Cynical readers, well aware of Administration lies, are ready to believe this story as truth, which it may very well be. This brief report, said to have been sent by Tiggelaar to Laura Rozen's WarAndPiece web log—and yes, it was posted there—appeared on a dozen blogs within hours. Google didn't register its existence on any mainstream internet site. So is this a rumor? Does that make it a lie—a lie about a liar? A hypothesis (or "conspiracy theory")? We were able to confirm that there is a ZDF German TV, and a CNN International report, but—two days too late for breaking news—didn't see this listing either in German or English. And we never did see TV clips from CNN and ZDF to prove the Bush group's mendacity.

So, can a parallel and almost simultaneous event provide that proof? Kevin Drum of *Washington Monthly* was with Bush, visiting (with press photographers) the 17th Street levee breach with equipment and supplies to repair it. Only the next day Drum flew over the spot in a helicopter and (Next page >>)

saw no progress and all but one piece of equipment gone. Sound like the disappearing food distribution "photo opportunity"? Whether there is an urgent reason for having moved the equipment, we don't know.

A Sea of Mendacity

If we were well-paid investigative reporters we might find out, but commercial TV thinks investigative reporting too costly and controversial to support, especially if such reporting discovers policy violations embarrassing to the media company or its advertisers. Our Justice departments concern themselves with the truth only in well-financed cases of slander or perjury. Venal congressmembers cut funding to public radio and TV, while power-seeking administrations pack their boards with conservatives, making documentaries rarer and more conforming. So we are left with a web of rumors about events crucial to our survival as an enlightened country, forced to tune in to Radio Netherlands (www.rnw.nl). No wonder Gandhi called his courageous activism *satyagraha*—truth-endeavor or truth-force.

Propaganda on its face is mendacity, institutionalized lying. It provides a web of slanted information, pseudo-information, or disinformation with as much credibility and authority as the propagandists can attach. Public relations—PR—does with contrived events what propaganda tries to do with words and images. TV has greatly extended and blended both propaganda and PR, for example, by "interviewing" the "President" in front of Coast Guard helicopters regarding rescue operations on the Gulf Coast. The immediate effect may favor Bush, but as viewers and commentators share impressions the effect may change, as when many viewers wondered why the helicopters were sitting behind Bush rather than out there delivering food and medicine.

We swim, float, or navigate in a sea of mendacity. We notice and take offense when certain individuals lie or deceive. But like fish in polluted water, we space out when bias, falsehood, and misleading theatrics seem to come from everywhere. We curse corporate advertising but ogle the sexy and sleek images it provides, and let them offset the intrusion. We hardly think about the fabric of lies, how they are combined, who contrived them, and for what purposes. That may be because we all lie, edge comments, and pretend while knowing that we are not evil individuals.

Institutional Lying and Deception

But are we systematically made to lie, deceive, and pretend as part of a group, organization, or institution? Are we helped to excuse our mendacity by our dependency on the group or institution? Yes, but our dependency may be dire, as that of a low-income salesperson, or merely convenient, as that of a highly-paid lobbyist. And what of the neo-cons entrenched in the White House and the Departments of State, Defense, Justice, and so on? Can we excuse their "by-any-means-necessary" mendacity because of their personal dependency upon an ideology they think will cleanse and save the world? Not in a democracy.

We don't have to focus on recent subversion of our institutions. Long-term institutional mendacity has created a chronic state of corruption.

● Congress's welcoming—with minimal restrictions—of corporate lobbyists, for example, is justified as educational when in fact it is a channel for favoritism and enrichment, and costly to

voters, taxpayers, and democracy itself.

● Legalizing corporate campaign contributions reinforces the ruse of corporate personhood, hoodwinking the unwary majority and putting ordinary citizens at huge disadvantage.

● Misnaming congressional bills—North American Free Trade Act, No Child Left Behind Act, and so on—is pure PR. Why doesn't Congress require a "balancing" subtitle to be devised by the opposition, such as North American Corporate Decontrol Act, or Federal Child Conformity Act?

● Leading politicians tell the public what benefits their bills "will" bring. But tax cuts, for example, rarely help the economy. Trade bills rarely bring prosperity to the many. Never mind downsides or side effects. Never mind using good theory. Lie with anecdotes and selected statistics.

● Most bills are passed with no provision for periodic review of results, and many without limits on the length of their application. So we can go on being deluded.

● Most bills which pass on principle are vulnerable to weakening or elimination in the wholesale processes of authorizing and appropriation. Congressmembers know this, but take credit for supporting the bill itself, deceiving the public.

● Professional assessment of candidates for federal court appointment are routine, but no such process is practiced for candidates for President. Thus psychology and psychiatry languish as psychopathic candidates con the public without any formal whistle-blowing.

● Corruption at the polls and in tallying votes has had massive effects not only on Americans, but on all nations and the earth. Lying by officials, and coverup by the media (and subversion of their own exit polling), seem irremediable because incumbent congressmembers benefit. The fig leaf bill supposed to remedy much of the problem—the Help America Vote Act—actually exacerbates it by paying for touch-screen voting machines. Uncle Sam, the Drug Dealer?

/// As an exercise, how many of these threads can you weave into the pattern manifested in the last example—election corruption?

/// And what encouragement would it take for you and your neighbors to begin to redesign the congress, the executive, the federal system, or your local government—before the deluge?



Reclaiming New Orleans (Continued from Page 1)

march on September 24, a massive "natural" disaster has unfolded in New Orleans and the Gulf Region. The horrible spectacle of tens of thousands of people, mostly poor, mostly African American, left behind to wither and die as they waited and waited for a rescue response has powerfully thrust the issue of racism back onto the American political radar. Once again, a predominantly white movement, mostly focused foreign policy issues, is challenged to respond to a domestic crisis involving people who don't look much like those who come to our meetings and demonstrations. To put it bluntly, are we, like the neoconservatives around George Bush, more comfortable with struggles far from the shores of the US than with overcoming differences locally in order to remake and rebuild the American nation?

Peace Advocates Respond to New Orleans

The initial response of the peace movement has been encouraging. People are constantly repeating that the National Guard, which could have helped, was bogged down in the quagmire in Iraq. People are also talking about the way money to rebuild the levee in New Orleans was instead diverted to Iraq. Locally (the Piedmont of North Carolina), activists are frantically raising funds to deliver three busloads of goods to New Orleans, and to return with three busloads of evacuees to our region. I'm confident similar efforts are underway in many places. Still, this initial response, while laudable, is only the tip of the iceberg.

It is not a simple question of funds, or the competency of George W. Bush. It is also worth noting the alarming way order has been restored in New Orleans. The New York Times, for example, yesterday had on their website a picture of a makeshift prison for looters as an appropriate illustration of the return of order. Democracy Now has reported that many National Guard seemed more intent on "restoring order" than engaging in rescue missions.

Reports are also trickling in that refugee camps parallel prison-like conditions. As in Iraq, liberation seems to mean more policing and incarceration. The US, having "liberated" Iraq, is now intent on reorganizing it according to priorities such as neoliberal draining of capital to the US and the construction of permanent military bases. Iraqis who stand in the way of these plans are regarded as "dangerous insurgents". Now that New Orleans has been "rescued", what priorities will be embedded in its rebuilding? Who will be regarded as dangerous obstacles to democracy?

These comparisons are intended to highlight the contours of the political struggles soon to come up around New Orleans. These questions are, concretely, a part of the same set of questions inspired by the occupation of Iraq. In order to sustain an unsustainable lifestyle and power position, the dominant groups in the US must reorganize spaces all over the country and the world. Necessarily this involves producing chaos, pushing a lot of people around, and locking up many others.

'Community Labor United' vs. Scattering of New Orleaners

This struggle, however, differs from the crisis in Flint in the 80s because community leadership exists on the ground, and now in the diaspora. A list of grassroots groups involved in hurricane relief, some based in New Orleans, others based elsewhere, can

be found at www.sparkplugfoundation.org/katrinarelief.html. Perhaps the most strategic group is Community Labor United, which is calling for grassroots oversight of the relief process. Their statement reads, in part, "The people of New Orleans will not go quietly into the night, scattering across this country to become homeless in countless other cities while federal relief funds are funneled into rebuilding casinos, hotels, chemical plants and the wealthy white districts of New Orleans like the French Quarter and the Garden District. We will not stand idly by while this disaster is used as an opportunity to replace our homes with newly built mansions and condos in a gentrified New Orleans."

Describing themselves, they say "Community Labor United (CLU), a coalition of the progressive organizations throughout New Orleans, has brought community members together for eight years to discuss socio-economic issues. We have been communicating with people from The Quality Education as a Civil Right Campaign, the Algebra Project, the Young People's Project and the Louisiana Research Institute for Community Empowerment."

Convergence of Seasoned Organizations

Anyone who has followed grassroots mobilizations over the last decade cannot be surprised at the existence of Community Labor United. Similar coalitions of labor unions, church groups, non-profits, and other activist organizations have been forming all over the country. Several characteristics are striking. First, these groups tend to combine the politics of class, environmentalism, and race, moving beyond the old hand-wringing about what is the truly most profound oppression (the validity of this sort of analysis has been amply born out in New Orleans over the last week, when an environmental calamity hit a poor community of color).

Secondly, while some key activists in these coalitions may be members of various socialist groupings, they are not typically dominated by them. Nor are they typically a mobilizing tool of the Democratic Party. They have much more autonomy than groups that grew out of efforts to create a Marxist Leninist party or came together to campaign for African American mayors in the seventies and eighties. Furthermore, national coordination among them is relatively weak. Thus they are well positioned to make pragmatic decisions about local situations, and whether there are politicians or other establishment forces that they can make provisional alliances with.

Finally, less happily, there is a considerable gulf between these coalitions, which are often predominantly people of color, and the predominantly white progressive movement. This gulf does not have its roots in political analysis (both groups broadly agree that American capitalism is responsible for wars abroad, racism and environmental degradation at home, etc) so much as in priorities and social composition of groups. The predominantly white groups often seem most energized about foreign policy issues; the community-labor coalitions often focus on things like living wage campaigns or education or housing issues. To the degree that people tend to hang out with those they are most comfortable with, there is a good deal of self-selection and homogenization. (Continued on Page 7 >>)

New Orleans: Rehearsing Martial Law? Suspicions of an American Expatriate

by Richard K Moore, Ireland, September 2005

2 September

I downloaded an article dated 2 September from the BBC, at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/4207202.stm>. It began as follows:

Crackdown in fearful New Orleans

US troops, armed with a shoot-to-kill policy, are being sent to New Orleans to quell growing lawlessness, four days after Hurricane Katrina hit. ... Announcing the deployment of 300 "battle-tested" National Guardsmen to New Orleans from Iraq, Louisiana Governor Kathleen Blanco said the men were carrying deadly weapons and were ready to use them. ...

If you go that URL now, the same day, you find a different article. There was no retraction of the previous BBC article: it was simply replaced by another. Evidently, unknown to the BBC at the time, the shoot-to-kill policy was not supposed to be known by the public. And I could find no other news sources reporting that policy. Suspicious. [*Since this time US media have mentioned shoot-to-kill policy. —Ed.*]

I don't know about you, but I find the rescue response to be beyond belief. I don't say that in the sense of a superlative, but rather in the sense that the response is, again, suspicious. Why are they able to send 300 troops from Iraq to shoot the starving, yet are unable to mount an effective Federal rescue effort? They had several days of advance warning of the hurricane, and knew it was of unprecedented magnitude. And how can they possibly give priority to stopping looting, by the starving, over the rescue effort itself?

Also suspicious are the reports of people firing on rescue helicopters. It is possible, but it makes little sense. Perhaps people are totally pissed off at the rescue response, but I still find it doubtful that they'd try to stop what rescue efforts are underway.

One other suspicious aspect has to do with which of the levees broke. It was not one of the old, earthworks levees, but rather a newly refurbished section, a concrete wall several feet thick. And it was along a canal which did not suffer the brunt of the wave action.

We might also note that the danger facing New Orleans has been known for some time. *Scientific American* published an article on it, "Drowning New Orleans", and in 2001, FEMA warned that a hurricane striking New Orleans was one of the three most likely disasters in the U.S. But the Bush administration cut the New Orleans flood control funding by 44 percent. In addition, the Louisiana National Guard has suffered the second most casualties in Iraq, after New York, which suggests that they have second most troops in Iraq, conveniently leaving New Orleans without local rescue support.

Overall, what I think we are seeing is a live test of a martial law regime. Perhaps the levee was blown up by pre-planted explosives, or perhaps not. But the response indicates that rescue is not the main agenda. If the objective is instead to test how people respond under post-apocalyptic martial law (i.e., after the planned

nuclear attack on Iran), then it becomes likely that it is intelligence agents, not the starving [or unsupplied drug addicts?—Ed.], who are shooting at rescuers.

Not only does the disaster give the Feds a chance to see how local folks respond to martial law, but they also get to see how the nation responds to reports from the area. This is very valuable research, given the likelihood that much of the U.S. will soon be under martial law, from the World War to be sparked in Iran, and the soon-to-come economic collapse—both engineered by New York banking interests. As a test of martial law, it makes sense for the disaster to be aggravated as much as possible, which seems to be what's happening.

5 September

...whenever the Feds are involved, helping the suffering seems to be no priority at all, or indeed a hindrance to their mission.



Proposed martial law badge

These reports* cannot be attributed to incompetence. The variety of these reports indicates a systematic policy of preventing any relief efforts other than those provided, or not provided, by the Federally-planned response. This is to be expected in a field test, so as not to pollute [contaminate quasi-experimental conditions] the research. Similarly, when they chose Hiro-

shima and Nagasaki as eventual test sites for the Manhattan Project, they put the two cities off limits for normal wartime bombing raids. [Mmmm, I never thought of that. —Ed.]

* Jordan Flaherty, eye witness at refugee camp just outside New Orleans: Armed US military personnel holding and herding refugees to undisclosed destinations:

http://www.dantewoo.com/blog/archives/2005/0902_notes_from_inside_ne.shtml

* Scott Shane, NY Times, cited federal agencies blocking supplies and thwarting others' helping:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/09/05/national/nationalspecial/05blame.html?th&emc=th>

* Paul Krugman, NY Times, noted military personnel playing basketball and doing calisthenics rather than attending to rescue:

http://www.nytimes.com/2005/09/02/opinion/02krugman.html?incamp=article_popular_1

* Various reporters on <http://rense.com/general67/DOME.HTM> and other Rense.com pages.

NOTE: *Emphasis (italics outside brackets) by Dispatch Editor.*
NOTE: The zeal with which federal agencies are preventing photography and covering up body-counts (even by exporting corpses for secret or dispersed disposal) tends to support Richard Moore's suspicions. More heinous is their disallowing wireless communication among refugees. —Ed.

CONTACT Richard K. Moore at <http://cyberjournal.org>

The Poetry of New Orleans

by Joyce Marcel, CommonDreams.org, 7 September 2005

Strong wind, strong wind. Many dead tonight it could be you. And we are homeless, homeless. Moonlight sleeping on a midnight lake.¹

How do we comprehend the drowning of New Orleans, home of Bourbon Street and Rampart Street and the St. James Infirmary and the whorehouse of the Rising Sun and so much jazz and folk and blues and Rock 'n' Roll that the city has always been one of the most crucial touchstones of American culture?

The roots of American rhythm are in Africa, and their tore-off broken branches were forcibly brought here in slave ships and still, somehow, took deep, deep root. And in the 19th Century, in Congo Square in New Orleans, the harsh rules of inhuman bondage were temporarily loosened while a multitude of African descendants played African instruments and, as best they could remember, played African rhythms and danced African dances and sang African songs.

"Town's folk would gather around the square on Sunday afternoons to witness," writes Thomas L. Morgan. "In 1819, a visitor to the city, Benjamin Latrobe wrote about the celebrations in his journal. He was amazed at the sight of five or six hundred unsupervised slaves that had assembled for dancing. He described them as ornamented with a number of tails of the smaller wild beasts, with fringes, ribbons, little bells, and shells and balls, jingling and flirting about the performers legs and arms... In addition to drums, gourds, banjo-like instruments and quillpipes made from reeds strung together like panpipes, marimbas and European instruments like the violin, tamborines and triangles were also used."

Out of these gatherings, these mixings of African music and culture and America and hard times, came the greatest music America would ever know. Ragtime and Stride led to Jazz led to Boogie-woogie led to Gospel and Rhythm & Blues and Rock 'n' Roll and Zydeco. Then there was Cajun, come from the bayous by way of Canada and France. It is safe to say that virtually no form of American music in the last 150 years has not been influenced by New Orleans. Musicians from other parts called it the Big Easy because the city had so much music that it was an easy place to get a job. Let the saints go marchin' in. Let the good times roll.

Louis Armstrong grew up in New Orleans; they named the airport after him. His trumpet is in a museum there - or at least it was, before Katrina hit. The Marsalis family. Three generations of Nevilles. The great and amazing New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival.

"Well, I'm walkin' to New Orleans" happily sang Rock and Roll Hall of Famer Fats Domino, one of the greatest boogie and stride piano players of our time. Lost in the floodwaters for almost four days, they finally pulled him out last Thursday. Another Hall of Famer, the legendary Allen Toussaint, who wrote "Java," "Whipped Cream," "Right Place Wrong Time" and "Mother-in-Law," among so many, many others, and who

produced so many other great artists, was also missing during the first days of the flood. Later they found him at the Superdome. Irma Thomas, officially named by the city the "Soul Queen of New Orleans," may still be missing.

What happened to your vaunted mojo, precious city?

*"Superstition is all I own. I've got black eyes and black cat bones. My demons won't feed me, they don't need me, I feel small... Just as tough as you can make it, I can take it all... If you teach me how to take it easy, I'll take it all."*²

Maybe we should ask the rock & roll doctor?

*"His patients come from Mobile, from Moline, from Madison. From Macon, Georgia down to New Orleans, in beat up old cars and limousines to meet the doctor of soul."*³

Doctor, what do we do now for our rhythm and our blues?

We mourn, baby. Now it's all we can do. We mourn.

*"Whippoorwill's singing, on a soft summer breeze. Makes me think of my baby, I left down in New Orleans."*⁴

New Orleans has always been tied to the landscape that surrounds it.

*"The stars can see Biloxi. The stars can find their faces in the sea. We are walking in the evening by the ocean. And the storms will blow from off towards New Orleans."*⁵

That one storm, that Katrina, she blew down Biloxi. She sure blew.

*"What has happened down here is the wind have changed... Louisiana, Louisiana. They're tryin' to wash us away. They're tryin' to wash us away."*⁶

Ten thousand may be dead. They are the weak, the sick, the old, the infirm, the many, many poor. They are the ancestors of the slaves of Congo Square. Bodies floating in the muck, and all of us, some way deep in our hearts, homeless, homeless, moonlight sleeping on a midnight lake.

*"Roll our your old-time carriage. Roll out your rubber-tyre hack. There's 12 men goin' to the graveyard, but 11 comin' back."*⁷

New Orleans is the spiritual home of American music. Now it's a waning stew of rot, sewage, rats and poisonous snakes. Strong wind, strong wind. Many dead tonight it could be you.

Footnotes:

- 1 "Homeless" by Paul Simon and Joseph Shabalala
- 2 "Take it All," Chris Smither.
- 3 "Rock 'n' Roll Doctor," Lowell George.
- 4 "Magnolia," J.J. Cale.
- 5 "Biloxi," Jesse Winchester.
- 6 "Louisiana 1927," Randy Newman.
- 7 "Frankie and Johnny," traditional.

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Brazil's Lula In Trouble

I. Lulanomics A Disappointment

by Walden Bello, *Focus on Global South*, 28 Jan 2005

...At the last Porto Alegre event, in January 2003, the forum was greatly animated by triumph of the Workers' Party candidate Lula (Luis Inacio da Silva) in the presidential polls a few months earlier. Today, the Brazilian progressive movement that is the backbone of the Porto Alegre process is dispirited owing to the fiscally conservative policies adopted by the Lula government, which have generated high unemployment and little growth. From being the hope of the Brazilian masses, Lula has become the darling of Washington and Wall Street owing to his full compliance with the measures proposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The "Lula problem" affects not only Brazilians. Many of the thousands trekking to Porto Alegre are upset at Brazil's role in reviving the World Trade Organization. The WTO appeared to have entered an irreversible crisis when its Fifth Ministerial collapsed in Cancún, Mexico, in September 2003. To revive the organization, the United States and the European Union coopted Brazil, along with India, as partners to create a framework for negotiations for a new Agreement on Agriculture. The result was the so-called July 2004 Framework Agreement that brought the WTO back on its feet. In almost all aspects, the July Framework was a bad deal for the South, but Brazil and India's endorsement of it made it difficult for most developing countries to resist its adoption by the WTO's General Council...

II. Corruption and political crisis

by Raul Bassi, *Green Left Weekly (Australia)*, 3 August 2005.

"The end of the last hope", was the way that a worker from Rio de Janeiro expressed her disillusionment with the Workers Party (PT) government of President Lucio Inacio "Lula" da Silva. "There is corruption, and the president is involved", she said. "Since 1980 I always voted PT, but now never again, and I am not the only one."

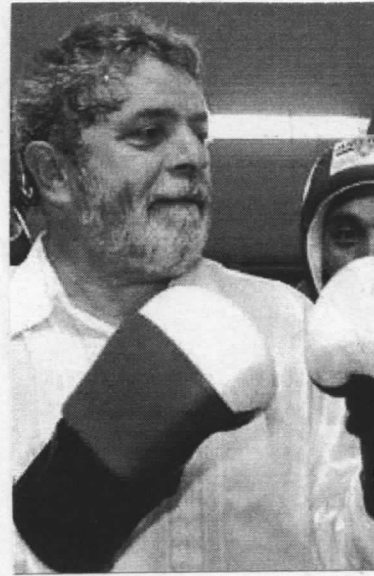
"Lula is still my hope", an old PT militant from Mina Gerais told *Folha de Sao Paolo*. "He will find the way out of crisis with his common sense ... But there are rotten elements in the party, every human being can make mistakes, in politics, or other activities. Lula is not guilty of anything, but I cannot say the same about the rest."

He insisted, "The PT and other parties have to be cleaned, with the police, in the same way that the government attacks drug traffickers or other delinquents ... The PT is not God's party, it has lots of devils, it should leave the arrogance of power and come back to its roots, or I won't have any reason to stay anymore."

These views are reflective of most Brazilians today. In the final week of May, a Sensus poll showed that support for the government had dropped by 2%, to 39.8%. A *Datafolha* poll published in early June in *Folha de Sao Paolo* confirmed that more than 65% of PT members accept that there is corruption in the government.

The immediate cause of this crisis is the growing scandal over corruption in the government, including among PT members. However, the crisis has a deeper basis related to problems that Lula has been confronting since the PT did very badly in the 2004 council elections.

The crisis is important, because it raises the whole question of how the PT has developed. Corruption has always been a



feature of Brazilian political life, but the PT was built on different "morals" and ethical principles that it appears to have forgotten now. As a consequence, its base has weakened and the government has been destabilised.

When Lula won, he made alliances with opposition parties — from the left to the right. He explained that he needed the alliances to develop the PT's progressive reformist agenda because the PT was a minority in parliament and it had too many

enemies in the big business and international organisations to stand alone.

So, as is common in Brazilian politics, Lula shared ministry positions with other parties and the president of the Brazilian Labor Party (PTB), Roberto Jefferson, became the manager of the Brazilian postal service.

In May, however, evidence of Jefferson and other PTB members' blatant corruption became public. Instead of going quiet and accepting responsibility, however, Jefferson defended himself by revealing some of the depth of corruption all parties have been involved in, including the PT. The rotten smell is still choking all Brazil with anger.

The most despicable revelation was that the *mensalao* was alive and well. *Mensalao* is the name given to a weekly bribe the government party pays to opposition parties in order to ensure the government can pass the legislation it wants. Lula apparently used *mensalao* to pass such anti-worker laws as his superannuation [pension fund] legislation, and allowing genetically modified food to be grown.

With this disclosure, the PT's image as a "clean" party was thrown out the door. Now, growing dissatisfaction with Lula's policies is threatening the government's stability. The disclosures have damaged the PT's image as a party that does things differently — exempt from many of the sins of the other parties — and have cost it support among left intellectuals and both the middle and working classes.

The crisis is not confined to the PT. It has revealed that the whole parliamentary system is full of corrupt politicians, and called this system into question.

The PT has failed to implement many of the changes it was

expected to, instead applying a rigid monetary policy, with high interest rates and a "healthy" budget surplus, in order to satisfy the country's creditors, such as the International Monetary Fund.

Given the electoral disaster in the council elections, the slowing economy, and growing internal division, the PT's future looks very dark. With federal elections due next year, the party appears to have alienated many of its supporters.

In late June, a rumour emerged that a group of multinational corporations, backed by Washington, were organising a right-wing coup with the opposition Socialist Democratic Party of Brazil (PSDB). The alleged coup was vigorously denounced by 43 social organisations, led by the Landless Workers Movement (MST), the trade union federation CUT and the student union UNE. The organisations, however, also called for the government to change its neoliberal policies.

The rumour seems contradictory, given that the multinationals, and government of US President George Bush, have been reasonably supportive of the Lula government's economic policies.

Lula has some breathing space. The Brazilian people, most of whom are not directly involved in mobilising or political activity, still look to Lula as the only alternative: the other parties that have been in government before are considered more corrupt and representative of the dominant, wealthy class.

Most of the left is still part of the PT, or is supporting it electorally. Those sections of the left outside it are too weak to pose a serious alternative. For example, the Socialism and Freedom Party (PSOL) is more concerned with electoral registration than with responding to the current crisis. PSOL's Senator Heloisa Helena is probably the most popular left-wing parliamentarian.

However, Lula is redrawing his alliances in order to survive the crisis and ensure a PT victory in 2006. The only possible parliamentary alliances at this stage are right-wing ones. The government has offered four more ministries to the Party of the Democratic Movement of Brazil (PMDB). This is particularly damaging because this party has been associated with the brutal dictatorship that controlled Brazil for almost 30 years.

In response to the corruption, many politicians have called for a parliamentary investigation commission (CPI). However, most Brazilians are extremely cynical about such commissions. Despite hundreds of CPIs over the years, corruption has not been shifted.

The PT has also attempted to diffuse the pressure with the resignation of Lula's chief of staff, Jose Dirceu, PT president Jose Genoino and the chief of intelligence.

A real commission — independent, made up of union leaders, independent parliamentarians and social movement leaders, held in public sessions — would make a difference. But such an open commission is in no politician's interests, nor in Washington's or the IMF's.

It is not enough just to tackle the corruption. The movements must keep demanding an end to the attacks on working people by the Lula government, and demanding policies that respond to the needs of the unemployed, the low-waged and the landless.

In Latin America, political crisis can grow into social crisis quickly. Economic desperation, combined with the example of people's struggles in countries such as Bolivia, Ecuador and Venezuela ensure that. This is sure to influence the unfolding events in Brazil. #

Although virtually all of the predominantly white peace groups I've participated in have had angst-ridden sessions lamenting the lack of diversity among our membership, I've never seen this situation dramatically change.

What I'd like to suggest is that the imminent battle over the future of New Orleans presents both unprecedented challenges and opportunities for these two groupings—community-labor organizations rooted in communities of color, and the predominantly white peace groups to come together and shape public debate in the US.

Act Now to Plan Reclamation, Derail Gentrification

Challenges [are there] because struggle will have to be organized in an impoverished diaspora. Make no mistake that the powerful would like to make a bunch of important decisions before New Orleans' citizens have time to regroup and put forth their own proposals.

Opportunities [are there] because the question of the future of New Orleans puts on the table with particular starkness questions about the future of urban space and community in general in the US. The failings of our current political economic system to meet people's needs have been starkly laid bare. While there are dozens of worthy struggles nationwide that one could support, much like prioritizing ending the occupation of Iraq, it is incumbent to strike where the defenses of empire are weakest. Furthermore, those of us beyond New Orleans have a crucial role to play in amplifying the local voices and strengthening their hand.

There have already been some positive developments. Houston indymedia has begun to set up a radio station for the Diaspora. The liberals at True Majority have solicited donations for Community Labor United, a far more potent response than MoveOn's petition to George Bush asking him to stop blaming the victims (why not at least ask the Democratic leadership to come up with a really strong aid/anti-poverty package, as Michael Lerner has demanded?). Locally, people are talking about demanding that Durham bring some rundown houses up to code to facilitate the housing of evacuees, thus facilitating better living conditions for evacuees and general improvement in the city.

What Are You Doing On 24 September?

On September 24th, when tens of thousands will be protesting the war in DC, Jobs with Justice (the largest national formation of community-labor groups) will be holding its annual meeting in St. Louis. Although this scheduling conflict was unintentional, it is redolent of the way the peace movement and the community labor movement are on separate tracks, despite parallel analysis. The looming battle of New Orleans gives us an unprecedented opportunity to bring these two tracks of the American left closer together. Natural disasters are often the spark for fresh forms of organizing. After all, it was the response to the failure of earthquake relief in Nicaragua [1972] that triggered the inexorable march to revolution in that country seven years later.

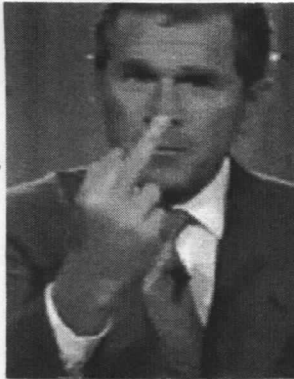
Steven Sherman is a sociologist who lives in Chapel Hill North Carolina. He can be reached at threehegemony@hotmail.com.

Is Bush Drinking Again? He Foul-Mouths Aides, Reporters, Critics

by Doug Thompson, *Capitol Hill Blue*, 25 August 2005

While President George W. Bush travels around the country in a last-ditch effort to sell his Iraq war, White House aides scramble frantically behind the scenes to hide the dark mood of an increasingly angry leader who unleashes obscenity-filled outbursts at anyone who dares disagree with him.

"I'm not meeting again with that god-damned bitch," Bush screamed at aides who suggested he meet again with Cindy Sheehan, the war-protesting mother whose son died in Iraq. "She can go to hell as far as I'm concerned!" Bush flashes the bird, something aides say he does often and has been doing since his days as governor of Texas.



Bush, administration aides confide, frequently explodes into tirades over those who protest the war, calling them "mother-fucking traitors." He reportedly was so upset over Veterans of Foreign Wars members who wore "bullshit protectors" over their ears during his speech to their annual convention that he told aides to "tell those VFW assholes that I'll never speak to them again is they can't keep their members under control."

White House insiders say Bush is growing increasingly bitter over mounting opposition to his war in Iraq. Polls show a vast majority of Americans now believe the war was a mistake and most doubt the President's honesty.

"Who gives a flying fuck what the polls say," he screamed at a recent strategy meeting. "I'm the President and I'll do whatever I goddamned please. They don't know shit."

Bush, while setting up for a photo op for signing the recent CAFTA bill, flipped an extended middle finger to reporters. Aides say the President often "flips the bird" to show his displeasure and tells aides who disagree with him to "go to hell" or to "go fuck yourself." His habit of giving people the finger goes back to his days as Texas governor, aides admit, and videos of him doing so before press conferences were widely circulated among TV stations during those days. A recent video showing him shooting the finger to reporters while walking also recently surfaced.

Bush's behavior, according to prominent Washington psychiatrist, Dr. Justin Frank, author of "Bush on the Couch: Inside the Mind of the President," is all too typical of an alcohol-abusing bully who is ruled by fear.

To see that fear emerges, Dr. Frank says, all one has to do is confront the President. "To actually directly confront him in a clear way, to bring him out, so you would really see the bully, and you would also see the fear," he says.

Dr. Frank, in his book, speculates that Bush, an alcoholic who brags that he gave up booze without help from groups like Alcoholics Anonymous, may be drinking again.

"Two questions that the press seems particularly determined to ignore have hung silently in the air since before Bush took office,"

Dr. Frank says. "Is he still drinking? And if not, is he impaired by all the years he did spend drinking? Both questions need to be addressed in any serious assessment of his psychological state."

Last year, *Capitol Hill Blue* learned the White House physician prescribed anti-depressant drugs for the President to control what aides called "violent mood swings." As Dr. Frank also notes: "In writing about Bush's halting appearance in a press conference just before the start of the Iraq War, Washington Post media critic Tom Shales speculated that 'the president may have been ever so slightly medicated.'"

Dr. Frank explains Bush's behavior as all-to-typical of an alcoholic who is still in denial:

"The pattern of blame and denial, which recovering alcoholics work so hard to break, seems to be ingrained in the alcoholic personality; it's rarely limited to his or her drinking," he says. "The habit of placing blame and denying responsibility is so prevalent in George W. Bush's personal history that it is apparently triggered by even the mildest threat."

Indicted?: Bush, Cheney, Rove, & Fitzgerald Jury Votes Perjury, Obstruction

by Tom Flocco, *tomflocco.com*, 2 August 2005

U.S. federal prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald's Chicago grand jury has issued perjury and obstruction of justice indictments to the following members of the Bush Administration: President George W. Bush, Vice-President Richard Cheney, Bush Chief of Staff Andrew Card, Cheney Chief of Staff I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby, Attorney General Alberto Gonzalez, former Attorney General John Ashcroft, imprisoned New York Times reporter Judith Miller and former Senior Cheney adviser Mary Matalin.

There were no indications given as to whether the President and his top staff members would appear publicly before cameras at the grand jury proceedings, given the gravity of the charges.

Besides the Valerie Plame CIA leak case, the Fitzgerald probe is reportedly far-reaching and expanding much deeper into past White House criminal acts involving Bush-Clinton drug money laundering in Mena, Arkansas to White House involvement in 9.11; but also for sending America's young people to their deaths or to be maimed in Iraq and Afghanistan under false pretenses.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair was indicted for obstruction of justice and is reportedly consulting with members of Parliament and legal aides regarding how to avoid appearing in the U.S.A. for interrogation before Fitzgerald in Chicago.

The revelations emanated from sources close to the grand jury who spoke with federal whistleblower Thomas Heneghen in California who said White House Senior Adviser to the President Karl Rove was also indicted for perjury and was reportedly involved with Mary Matalin in a major Bush administration document shredding operation to cover-up evidence.

Heneghen had reported over ten days ago on a TruthRadio.com broadcast that his sources close to the grand

jury said former Secretary of State Colin Powell had been subpoenaed and had testified against President Bush, telling the citizen panel that the President had taken the United States to war based upon lies—a capital crime involving treason under the United States Code.

Heneghen also reported a week ago that Gonzalez and Card had been subpoenaed and that Tony Blair had defied his subpoena after the response time limit had expired.

Sources close to the investigation report that members of the House, Senate, 9.11 Commission and other members of the media are also under investigation as potential targets by a grand jury regarding obstruction of justice and other oversight failures linked to the 9.11 attacks—indicating that citizen panelists working with Fitzgerald may be seeking a wholesale cleansing of what many have said is a crime-wracked White House and Congress.

Dream of the Month:

Melted down by the mendacity and waste of Iraq and New Orleans, Republicans split and Democrats narrowly take control of the House after the 2006 elections. House majority elects once Republican, now Independent, Ron Paul as Speaker. House impeaches Bush and Cheney, Senate confirms this, and Paul becomes US President. After a confirming plebiscite, the country closes ranks and a period of reconceptualization of parties and Congress begins.

—Thanks to Jed Schwartz for this scenario, except that instead of Ron Paul he cited Nancy Pelosi as Speaker and President-to-be.

A Sample of Libertarian Rep. Ron Paul's Thinking:

Strip the Federal Courts of Their Power

by Representative Ron Paul, 17 August 2005

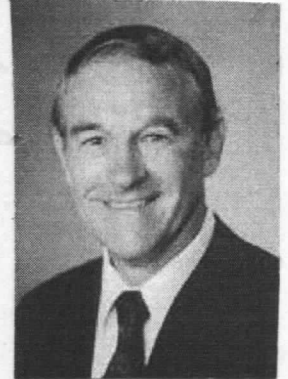
The nomination of Judge John Roberts to sit on the Supreme Court has reopened a bitter cultural divide in America, and the Senate confirmation hearings in September may exhibit more of the partisan rancor that characterized the Robert Bork and Clarence Thomas hearings.

It's sad that so many Americans see their freedoms as dependent on a single Supreme Court justice. Federal judges were never meant to wield the tremendous power that they do in modern America. Our Founders would find it inconceivable that a handful of unelected, unaccountable federal judges can decide social policy for the entire nation.

Dozens of political pressure groups stood ready to launch an immediate public relations attack on any judge nominated by President Bush, while dozens of others stood ready to support the nominee no matter what. These groups reflect the unfortunate

reality that millions of Americans unquestioningly support or oppose judicial nominees based solely on the party affiliation of the current president. Once again, blind loyalty to political parties has politicized a process that our Founders never intended to be political. When we as voters and citizens allow the nomination of judges to become political, we have only ourselves to blame for the politicization of our courts themselves. When courts become politicized, judges not surprisingly begin to act like politicians.

Judicial activism, after all, is the practice of judges ignoring the law and deciding cases based on their personal political views. With the federal judiciary focused more on legislating social policy than upholding the rule of law, Americans find themselves increasingly governed by men they did not elect and cannot remove from office.



Congress is guilty of enabling judicial activism. Just as Congress ceded far too much legislative authority to presidents throughout the 20th century, it similarly has allowed federal judges to operate wildly beyond their constitutional role. In fact, many current members of Congress apparently accept the false notion that federal court judgments are superior to congressional statutes. Unless and until Congress asserts itself by limiting federal court jurisdiction, judges will continue to act as de facto lawmakers.

The congressional power to strip federal courts of jurisdiction is plainly granted in Article III, and no constitutional amendments are required. On the contrary, any constitutional amendment addressing judicial activism would only grant legitimacy to the dangerous idea that social issues are federal matters. Giving more authority over social matters to any branch of the federal government is a mistake, because a centralized government is unlikely to reflect local sentiment for long. Both political parties are guilty of ignoring the 9th and 10th amendments, and federalizing whole areas of law that constitutionally should be left up to states. This abandonment of federalism and states' rights paved the way for an activist federal judiciary.

The public also plays a role in the erosion of our judiciary. Since many citizens lack basic knowledge of our Constitution and federalist system, they are easily manipulated by media and academic elites who tell them that judges are the absolute and final arbiters of US law. But the Supreme Court is not supreme over the other branches of government; it is supreme only over lower federal courts. If Americans wish to be free of judicial tyranny, they must at least develop basic knowledge of the judicial role in our republican government. The present state of affairs is a direct result of our collective ignorance.

Ron Paul, M.D., is a Republican [Libertarian] member of Congress from Texas [Galveston area]. For his more than 250 archived statements like this on many named issues, see <http://www.lewrockwell.com/paul/paul-arch.html>

CHAPTER NEWS

Local-Governance Conference

This month's big BCA project reaches beyond the Boston area to all of New England. It's the second roundtable conference on Popular Governance in New England, to be held in Burlington, Vermont, on 24 September. Its special focus will be on Participatory Budgeting, skyrocketed onto the pro-democracy scene by developments over the past 15 years by the Workers Party (PT) in Porto Alegre, Brazil. (PB may have a life of its own beyond PT and Lula's troubles, unless city hall is taken over by a corporatist majority.) Burlington was chosen for its pro-participation history, especially its neighborhood planning assemblies.

The conference, organized principally by **Dave Lewit**, will compare Burlington, Boston, New England town meetings and Brazil's experiences and prospects for adapting all to each locality. In addition to **Michael Monte** and **Terry Bouricius** from Burlington, and **Gianpaolo Baiocchi** from UMass and Brazil, Boston City Councilor **Chuck Turner**, and Concord MA Town Moderator **Ned Perry** will present their localities' perspectives. Other community activists from VT, CT, MA, NH, and ME will challenge and provide insights and prospects. All will be professionally video recorded, in order to produce a 30-minute DVD for education and organizing.

Dispatch's Summer Junket

Former BCA co-chair **Jean Maryborn** is alive and well and living in a large chalet in the woods near Sandpoint, Idaho, near her daughters and grandchildren. Jean remains active on the national AfD Council, and locally finds the Friends (Quaker) Meeting to be the most lively and progressive in generally pro-Bush Idaho. **Dave Lewit** and friend **Ignacio Castuera** visited her and her family on a three-week auto trip beginning in LA and Berkeley CA, meeting with activists in OR and WA, and ending in Las Vegas, where a large Pax Christi conference was re-examining the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and Pacific Islands where the bomb was tested. We drove 60 miles through the desert to the US Dept of Energy's privatized Nuclear Test Site managed by Lockheed-Martin. We were greeted by a Wackenhut security guard who wanted us gone. So we drove off, stopped the car, and pissed on the property, hopefully leaving our mark.

In Berkeley Ignacio spoke to the assembled 1,300 at Rabbi **Michael Lerner's** ecumenical conference on politically activating the religious (or spiritual) Left, and led a working group. Dave brought the CAIS (democratic local-global) perspective into the Nonviolence working group. Major speakers included the charismatic young leader **Van Jones**, whose words appeared in these pages in December 2004... In Seattle Dave and Ignacio appeared on **Jim Rough's** local TV show to explain anti-corporatist democracy and spiritually-informed progressivism. Jim has been developing randomly-composed "wisdom councils" assisted by "dynamic facilitation", and is promoted by **Richard K Moore** (see page 4, this issue)... Taking a cue from Jean, Dave asks us all to ponder the Quaker meeting and the small-group strategy of the evangelical movement (see Rev. Rick Warren in *New Yorker* for 12 Sept.)... Yes, we did see magnificent land and sky, and were brought to tears at the story of ambush of the **Nez Perce tribe**, Big Hole MT, in the US's genocidal "Manifest Destiny" campaign.

ACTION ALERTS

Donations for relief of New Orleans victims can safely be sent to The Peoples Hurricane Fund, Vanguard Public Foundation, 383 Rhode Island St., Suite 301, San Francisco, CA 94103, or visit www.qecr.org.

Mon, 19 Sept, 6-8pm, Dorchester. **Workers Unite for Felix.** Re-elect Felix Arroyo, fund-raiser. Boston Teachers Union, 180 Mt. Vernon Street. Info: www.felixarroyo.net/events3.html

Sat, 24 Sept, 1:00pm, Boston. **Anti-War Rally**, in solidarity with Washington DC events that weekend, described below. At Park Street T. Endorsed by United for Justice with Peace.

Sat-Mon, 24-26 Sept, Washington DC. **Massive Anti-War Convergence and Actions.** Sat: 11:30 Rally at Wash Monument Ellipse, 12:30 March from Ellipse past World Bank and IMF Hqs. 3:00 Concert and talk by Cindy Sheehan. Sun: Service, festival, direct-action training, mock trial of Donald Rumsfeld. Mon: Lobby congress, nonviolent direct-action at White House.

Bus transport from Boston Common, Alewife, and Riverside. Reserve seats at www.justicewithpeace.org. Info on trains, rides, housing, general info, inquire AFSC 617-661-6130.

Sun, 2 Oct, 2-4pm, Braintree. **Against Military Recruitment.** Pro-military Rep. Stephen Lynch with officers of US military academies on platform. Join Veterans for Peace and others protesting in rear/outside. East Jr. High School, 305 River St.

JOIN THE BCA

YOU DON'T HAVE TO LIVE IN BOSTON TO LOVE BCA

Please help us as we fight to make a better future for ourselves and our children -- Join the Boston/Cambridge Alliance for Democracy. (Cut out this form and send it to:

Dave Lewit, 271 Dartmouth St. #2h, Boston, MA 02116.)
BOSTON-CAMBRIDGE ALLIANCE for DEMOCRACY PLEDGE
___ \$26/Year - "Count me in!"
___ \$52/Year - "Contributor" (We need to average this amount.)
___ \$104/Year - "Sustainer" (Helping us thrive.)
___ \$208/Year - "Community Steward"
___ \$500/Year - "Realize the vision!"
___ What's fair for YOU? \$___

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COLOPHON

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